

What should be recited in Salāt al-Witr?

Shaykh Sulaymān ibn Nāsir al-'Alwān (حفظه الله) said:

The Sunnāh for whoever prays 3 Rak'ah of Witr is to read after the Fātihah, "Sūrat al-A'lah" & in the second [rak'ah] "Sūrat al-Kāfirūn" and in the third [rak'ah] "Sūrat al-Ikhlās" because of the Hadīth of Sa'īd ibn 'Abdul al-Rahmān ibn Abzā from his father from Ubayy ibn Ka'b (رضي الله عنه) that he said: "The Prophet (صلى الله عليه وسلم) used to make Witr by reciting 'Sabih isma Rabika al-a'lah' and 'Qul yā ayuha al-kāfirūn' and 'Qul huwa Allāhu Ahad'.." This is reported by Imām Ahmad [1], Abū Dāwūd [2] and al-Nasā'ī [3].

And the two Imāms, al-Shāfi'ī & Mālik may Allāh (جل و علا) have mercy upon them, recommended reciting the Mu'awithatayn (Sūrat al-Nās & Sūrat al-Falaq) after Sūrat al-Ikhlās, because of what Abū Dāwūd [4], al-Tirmidhī [5] and ibn Mājah [6] have narrated from the chain of Khasīf from 'Abdul 'Azīz ibn Jurayj from 'Ā'isha (رضي الله عنها) that the Prophet (صلى الله عليه وسلم) used to recite in the first Rak'ah 'Sabih isma rabika al-a'lah' and in the second rak'ah 'Qul yā Ayuha al-kāfirūn' and in the third Rak'ah 'Qul huwa Allāhu Ahad & the Mu'awithatayn (Sūrat al-Nās & al-Falaq)'.

And it was narrated by ibn Hibbān (رحمه الله) in his Sahīh and al-Tahāwī (رحمه الله) and al-Hākim (رحمه الله) and others from the chain of Yahya ibn Ayūb from Yahya ibn Sa'eed from 'Umrah from 'Ā'isha (رضي الله عنها) from him [the prophet (صلى الله عليه وسلم)]. And it was authenticated by al-Hākim (رحمه الله), and Al-Dhahabī (رحمه الله) did not comment upon his Grading, and it was graded Hassan by ibn Hajr (رحمه الله) in Natā'ij al-Afkār [7]. And there is dispute in this, because the addition of "al-Mu'awithatayn" in the hadīth isn't authentic and it's not prescribed to be recited after Sūrat al-Ikhlās, and Imām Ahmad ibn Hanbal (رحمه الله) and Yahya ibn Ma'een (رحمه الله) have rejected the addition of "Al-Mu'awithatayn" and the statements are mentioned below:

- The first report of 'Ā'isha (رضي الله عنها) has a disconnection (إنقطاع) in the chain, and that is because ibn Jurayj didn't meet/hear from 'Ā'isha, this was said by Imām Ahmad (رحمه الله), ibn Hibbān (رحمه الله) & a group of scholars [8], and al-Bukhārī (رحمه الله) said in al-Tārīkh al-Kabīr (6/23) 'Abdul 'Azīz ibn Jurayj from 'Ā'isha (رضي الله عنها) doesn't follow up in the hadīth [meaning it's Munkar, Rejected]. And the person it's narrated from Khasīf ibn 'Abdul Rahmān has a weak memory. He was weakened by Imām Ahmad (رحمه الله) and ibn Khuzaymah (رحمه الله) and Yahyah ibn Sa'eed al-Qattān (رحمه الله) said "It was on that day we stayed away from Khasīf's hadīth" [9].

- As for the second hadīth, it's not authentic. And the Tafarrūd [singular narration] of Yahya ibn Ayūb cannot be relied upon. Al-Athram (رحمه الله) said: "I heard Abū 'Abdillāh ask about Yahyah ibn Ayūb al-Masrī, so he said "He used to narrate from his memory, and there was nothing wrong with him, and he used to make alot of faults from his memory, so I mentioned

to him one of his hadīth on the authority of Yahyah from 'Umrah from Ā'isha "That the messenger used to recite in al-Witr...[the hadīth which mentions the addition after Al-Ikhlās]. So he said "Ahh, who narrated this" and he said one time: "How many people have narrated this from Ā'isha and it doesn't have this[addition], so he rejected the hadīth of Yahya in specific" [10].

And al-'Uqaylī(رحمه الله) said "As for the mu'awithatayn, it's not authentic" and therefore, it's not prescribed to recite them after Sūrat al-Ikhlās because of the weakness of the reports regarding it, so the Musallī [the person praying] should recite from the authentically narrated reports, "Sūrat al-A'lah" in the first Rak'ah, "Sūrat al-Kāfirūn" in the second Rak'ah and in the third Rak'ah "Sūrat al-Ikhlās" and shouldn't add onto this. And some of the scholars don't view it recommended to intentionally recite these 3 Sūrah's [11], and this is disputable, and the hadīth of Ubayy ibn Ka'b(رضي الله عنه) refutes this(since the hadīth proves that it's Mustahhab). And some scholars said that you shouldn't continuously persist in reciting these Sūrah's in al-Witr because he will go towards the understanding that it's compulsory to do so [12]. And there is strength in this saying, because the constant [recitation of these Suwar] hasn't been proven, but as for the reasoning [they gave], then it's disputable because it would be applied upon all of the Sunan, and this isn't correct.

And know that it's recommended once you finish from the Witr to say "Subhān al-Malik al-Qudūs" three times because of the hadīth of Ubayy ibn Ka'b(رضي الله عنه) where he said "The Prophet(صلى الله عليه وسلم) used to recite in the Witr[The hadīth where it mentions the Sūrah's]" and in the (same hadīth, it mentions) "if he gave Taslīm, he would say: Subhān al-Malik al-Qudūs three times" Narrated by al-Nasā'ī [13]. And in the hadīth of 'Abdul Rahmān ibn Abza(رضي الله عنه) who is a small companion "And he(the prophet) would raise his voice on the third time(of saying Subhān al-Malik al-Qudūs)". Narrated by Ahmad(رحمه الله) and al-Nasā'ī(رحمه الله), and al-Dāraqutnī [14] added onto the hadīth of Ubayy ibn Ka'b(رضي الله عنه) "Rabb al-Malā'ikah wa'l Rūh" and this addition isn't authentic and what's memorised is the previously mentioned hadīth والله اعلم

[1] Musnad al-Imām Ahmad (5/123)

[2] Sunan Abū Dāwūd hadīth #1423

[3] Sunan Al-Nasā'ī (3/244)

[4] Sunan Abū Dāwūd hadīth #1424

[5] Jāmi' al-Tirmidhī hadīth #463

[6] Sunan ibn Mājah hadīth #1173

[7] And refer to al-Talkhīs (2/18-19)

[8] Kitāb al-Marāsīl(112) by ibn Abī Hātim & Mashāhīr 'ulemā' al-Amsār(145) by ibn Hibān.

[9] Refer to al-Majrūhīn by ibn Hibān(1/283)

[10] Al-Du'afā' by al-'Uqaylī(4/391) & Tanqīh al-Tahqīq(2/1061)

[11] Refer to Mukhtasir Qiyām al-Layl page (303) & al-Bināyah(2/585-586)

[12] Refer to Hāshiyat al-Rawdh al-Murbi'(2/188)

[13] Sunan al-Nasā'ī(2/244) & refer to Musnad al-Imām Ahmad(3/406)

[14] Sunan al-Dāraqutnī(2/31)